

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03

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FM AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5192

INFO AMEMBASSY COLOMBO

AMEMBASSY DACCA

AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD

AMEMBASSY KABUL

AMCONSUL BOMBAY

AMCONSUL CALCUTTA

AMCONSUL MADRAS

CINCPAC

C O N F I D E N T I A L NEW DELHI 5245

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, IN, PK, US

SUBJECT: DEFENCE MINISTER SEES PAKISTANI BUILD-UP, DANGER FROM
DIEGO GARCIA

REF: (A) NEW DELHI 4153 (B) NEW DELHI 4591 (NOTAL)

(C) IR 6 010 5288 76

1. IN HIS MAIDEN SPEECH TO THE LOK SABHA ON APRIL 6,
DEFENCE MINISTER BANSI LAL CONTINUED WITH SOME OF THE SAME
THEMES HE AND DEPUTY FOREIGN MINISTER BIPIN PAL DAS HAVE
SOUNDED IN THEIR LATE MARCH PUBLIC SPEECHES. LAL WARNED OF
A PAKISTANI MILITARY BUILD-UP, AND THE DANGER TO INDIA RESULT-
ING FROM THE CONVERSION OF DIEGO GARCIA FROM A COMMUNICATIONS
FACILITY TO A "FULLFLEDGED NAVAL BASE."

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2. EXCERPTS FROM LAL'S REMARKS FOLLOW:

A) "THE ORIGINAL INHABITANTS OF DIEGO GARCIA WERE SHIFTED TO MAURITIUS, AND NOW IT IS BEING DEVELOPED INTO A FULLFLEDGED MILITARY BASE. NOT ONLY A NAVAL BASE, I WOULD RATHER LIKE TO CALL IT A FULLFLEDGED MILITARY BASE. THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA HAS ALREADY CONSTRUCTED AN AIRFIELD THERE HAVING A LENGTH OF ABOUT 8000 FEET AND NOW THEY ARE INCREASING IT TO ACCOMMODATE MORE SOPHISTICATED AND HEAVY PLANES AND FOR MARITIME RECONNAISSANCE IN THE INDIAN OCEAN. AS WE HAVE ALWAYS BEEN SAYING, WE WANT THE INDIAN OCEAN AS A ZONE OF PEACE BUT THE PRESENCE OF BIG POWERS IS CREATING PROBLEMS, AND IF I MAY SAY SO, IT CAN REALLY BECOME A DANGEROUS SPOT, A VULNERABLE POINT FROM THE STRATEGIC POINT OF VIEW. IN SPITE OF OUR BEST EFFORTS AND OUR PROTESTS, THE BIG POWERS ARE NOT KEEPING THEIR SHIPS AWAY FROM THE INDIAN OCEAN; MANY OF THEM ARE THERE.

B) "WE ARE NOT AGGRESSORS AND WE DO NOT HAVE ANY TERRITORIAL AMBITIONS. UNDER THESE CIRCUMSTANCES, FROM WHOM PAKISTAN HAS FEARS. IT GIVES AN IDEA THAT PAKISTAN ITSELF MAY HAVE EVIL DESIGNS AND KEEPING IN VIEW THE EVIL DESIGNS OF PAKISTAN, WE HAVE ALSO TO KEEP OURSELVES READY TO DEFEND OUR BORDERS. TO AVOID A WAR IS TO BUILD THE NATION AS STRONG AS POSSIBLE. IF SOMEBODY THINKS THAT INDIA IS WEAK, HE CAN ATTACK THE COUNTRY AT ANY TIME AND HE CAN TRY TO HAVE A CHANCE TO GAIN SOMETHING FROM HER, I WANT TO MAKE IT VERY CLEAR ON THE FLOOR OF THIS HOUSE THAT WE ARE NEVER COMPLACENT. WE ARE ALWAYS PREPARED TO MEET ANY EVENTUALITY.

C) "BUT I AM SORRY TO SAY THAT PAKISTAN IS NOT HONOURING THIS SIMLA AGREEMENT. PAKISTAN ITSELF HAS BEEN VIOLATING THE SIMLA AGREEMENT. AND THEN THE OTHER THING WHICH CONCERNS US IS THE LIFTING OF U.S. EMBARGO ON SALE OF ARMS TO PAKISTAN. OUR PRIME MINISTER VERY RIGHTLY SAID IN THE RAJYA SABHA ON 26TH FEBRUARY, 1976, THAT THE U.S. DECISION AMOUNTED TO REOPENING OF OLD WOUNDS AND HINDERING THE PROCESS OF NORMALISATION. PAKISTAN IS GETTING HARDWARE FROM CHINA ALSO. CHINA IS SUPPLYING SOPHISTICATED ARMS TO PAKISTAN. THIS AGAIN IS A MATTER OF SERIOUS CONCERN.
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D) "AND WE HAVE PROBLEMS LIKE THE DIEGO GARCIA, THE PRESENCE OF BIG POWERS IN THE INDIAN OCEAN AND THE OFFSHORE INSTALLATIONS IN THE BOMBAY HIGH. THE ANDAMAN AND NICOBAR ISLANDS AS ALSO THE LAKSHADWEEP ISLANDS ARE NOW EXPOSED TO MARITIME RECONNAISSANCE BY THE AMERICAN NAVY AND NAVAL AIR FORCE."

3. COMMENT: WE FIND LAL'S REMARKS ON PAKISTAN SOMEWHAT MILDER THAN HIS MARCH 21 REMARK THAT A COUNTRY (PAKISTAN)

WHICH ATTACKED INDIA ONCE WOULD BE TOTALLY DESTROYED IF IT HAPPENED AGAIN. LAL, HOWEVER, CONTINUED HIS THEME THAT PAKISTAN WAS REARMING AT A FEVERISH PACE. THE DEFENCE MINISTER'S REFERENCES TO DIEGO GARCIA MARK A DEPARTURE FROM THE STANDARD INDIAN LINE THAT DIEGO GARCIA POSES A MULTILATERAL QUESTION WHICH REQUIRES CONCERTED ACTION BY ALL THE LITTORAL STATES OF THE INDIAN OCEAN. LAL MOVES IN THE DIRECTION OF MAKING IT A BILATERAL ISSUE. WE SHALL BE WATCHING INDIAN STATEMENTS ON THIS SUBJECT CAREFULLY TO DETERMINE WHETHER LAL IS SIGNALING A CHANGE IN INDIAN POLICY, OR AS WE SUSPECT, IS ON UNFAMILIAR GROUND AND RESPONDING TO THE EMOTIONALISM OF THE MOMENT.
SCHNEIDER

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